



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### FWS PLAN WILL PROTECT WILDLIFE UNDER BIG IRRIGATION PROJECT

The proposed Garrison Diversion Unit of the Missouri Basin Project, in North and South Dakota, which falls within a part of America's great waterfowl producing area, can be constructed without serious injury to wildlife resources and will enhance fishery resources under a plan worked out by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. This was announced today by Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross L. Leffler.

The Fish and Wildlife Service recommendations have been made a part of Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton's proposed report to the Congress on the project.

The plan, which was developed by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife in cooperation with the North Dakota and South Dakota game and fish departments and the Bureau of Reclamation, calls for the establishment of 62 wildlife-management areas which would compensate to a large extent for the waterfowl habitat lost by drainage of wet lands and reservoir flooding within the Garrison unit.

The areas also would provide new fishing waters and additional habitat for upland game. The proposal would improve about 47,000 acres of existing waterfowl habitat and establish about 25,000 acres of new habitat. The management areas, ranging in size from 50 to 15,800 acres, would be scattered through more than a dozen counties in North Dakota and in two counties in South Dakota.

The Garrison Diversion Unit would provide irrigation water for 1,007,000 acres of land, mostly in North Dakota. The project calls for taking water out of the newly created Garrison Reservoir which was constructed by the Corps of Engineers. A part of the Lower Souris National Wildlife Refuge would be flooded by the construction of Westhope Reservoir, and Sheyenne Lake National Wildlife Refuge would be eliminated by Lonetree Reservoir, but provisions are made for the

replacement of these lost wildlife areas. Moreover, a plan is included for the development of a fine waterfowl management area at the West Bay of Devils Lake.

The lands to be affected by the big irrigation-project are in the midst of what is known as the "pothole area", which produces about 75 percent of the ducks hatched in the United States. This area contains thousands upon thousands of small, water-holding depressions--collectively called "potholes"--which provide courting, nesting, and rearing places for ducks. It extends into western Minnesota and northeastern Montana, but potholes in those States are not affected by the proposed project.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has studied the Garrison Diversion Project for some years because of its obviously profound effects upon waterfowl production. Ducks raised in the project area contribute to hunting in varying degrees throughout the United States. As construction of the project continues over the years, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife technicians will work closely with project engineers to take advantage of other opportunities for improving wildlife conditions.

The construction costs for fish and wildlife developments would be about \$13,600,000. The cost of the entire project has been estimated by the Bureau of Reclamation at approximately \$695,000,000.

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